

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 MCT-01 IO-13
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /105 W
-----099686 030647Z /11

R 030544Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7514
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USINT HAVANA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 1012

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, ET
SUBJECT: RED TERROR CAMPAIGN MAY DECLINE IN FUTURE

SUMMARY AND COMMENT: ALTHOUGH RED TERROR CAMPAIGN CONTINUES AT STEADY RATE, ALBEIT MORE CLANDESTINELY, GENERALLY RELIABLE SOURCE STATED THAT DIRG IS CONTEMPLATING WHETHER TO TIGHTEN ITS CONTROL OVER THREE MAJOR ELEMENTS IMPLEMENTING CAMPAIGN. SEVERAL RECENT PRESS ARTICLES INDICATE RED TERROR MAY HAVE ACHIEVED ITS GOALS OF ABOLISHING "WHITE TERROR" AND OF DISCOURAGING YOUTH FROM JOINING EPRP, AS WELL AS EFFECTIVELY CRUSHING EPRP ORGANIZATION WITHIN ETHIOPIA. DIRG THINKING STILL APPEARS TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT POPULAR SUPPORT, FOR THEMSELVES AND REVOLUTION, AND THEY MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT RED TERROR CAMPAIGN HAS SERIOUSLY ERODED THAT SUPPORT. WHILE CAMPAIGN HAS UNDOUBTEDLY HAD DEVASTATING IMPACT ON EPRP, THERE IS SOME SUSPICION AMONG DIRG THAT IT HAS ALSO BEEN USED TO STRENGTHEN

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NON-EPRP OPPONENTS OF DIRG AMONG CIVILIANS, ESPECIALLY ME'ISON (ALL ETHIOPIAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT - AESM) AND WITHIN POLITICAL/MILITARY CADRES, ESPECIALLY SEDED (REVOLUTIONARY FLAME). THUS, POSSIBLE DIRG PLANS TO WIND DOWN RED TERROR CAMPAIGN FOR MOMENT MAY BE MOTIVATED BY RECOGNITION THAT CAMPAIGN HAS CREATED INORDINATE DIFFUSION OF POWER, WHILE AT SAME TIME PROVIDING JUSTIFICATION FOR RECRUITMENT OF ANTI-DIRG

ELEMENTS. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT UNFAVORABLE INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY ABOUT CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN MUCH OF FACTOR IN DIRG THINKING. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

1. GENERALLY RELIABLE SOURCE WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO "LEFTIST" CIVILIAN ADVISORS TO PROVISIONAL MILITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL (PMAC OR DIRG) REPORTED THAT DURING PAST WEEK (FEB 20-24) DIRG HAD DISCUSSED CONSEQUENCES AND STATUS OF RED TERROR CAMPAIGN. DISCUSSION REPORTEDLY REFLECTED DIRG CONCERN THAT THREE MAJOR ELEMENTS CONDUCTING CAMPAIGN--DIRG OPERATIONS COMMITTEE, REVOLUTIONARY DEFENSE SQUADS, AND PROVISIONAL OFFICE OF MASS ORGANIZATIONAL AFFAIRS (POMOA) "HIT SQUADS"--ARE TAKING REVOLUTIONARY MEASURES, I.E. EXECUTIONS, ARRESTS AND INTERROGATIONS, INDEPENDENTLY AND WITHOUT DIRG CONTROL. THIS HAS PERMITTED DEFENSE SQUADS AND POMOA CADRES ESPECIALLY TO ACQUIRE GREAT DEAL OF LOCALIZED POWER AND AUTONOMY. IN STRICTLY MACHIAVELLIAN TERMS, DIRG PROBABLY VIEWS THIS AS THREAT TO ITS AUTHORITY.

2. WHEN DIRG HAS FELT SIMILAR CHALLENGE IN PAST FROM ME'I SONE, IT ACTED DECISIVELY TO CURTAIL ME'I SONE'S POWER WITHIN IDEOLOGY SCHOOL AND REDFINED STATUS OF POLITBURO (POMOA) ITSELF, WHERE ME'I SONE WAS MAJOR FORCE. RESULT WAS DEFECTION OF PRINCIPAL ME'I SONE LEADERS, WHICH LED IN TURN TO RECENT BRIEFING (FEB 9-10) BY IDEO-SECRET

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LOGY SCHOOL CADRES TO VISITING JOURNALISTS, DROPPING ME'I SONE AS ONE OF FIVE DIRG-SANCTIONED MARXIST-LENINIST GROUPS. THERE CONTINUES TO BE SOME SUSPICION WITHIN DIRG ABOUT ME'I SONE LEADERS WHO DID NOT DEFECT AND WHO HOLD KEY CIVILIAN POSITIONS. ONE OF PRIME TARGETS OF DIRG SUSPICION IS ADDIS ABABA MAYOR, DR. ALEMU ABEBE, A FORMER POLITBURO MEMBER. DIRG IS QUESTIONING WHETHER IT MORE THAN COINCIDENTAL THAT ALEMU BECAME MAYOR JUST PRIOR TO INTENSIFICATION OF RED TERROR CAMPAIGN. (N.B. CAMPAIGN AGAINST URBAN "ANTI-REVOLUTIONARIES" HAS BEEN KEY ME'I SONE PROGRAM TO ELIMINATE ITS OPPONENTS, WHICH WAS FIRST FORMULATED IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1976. IN FACT, PROGRAM WAS INITIATED PIECEMEAL IN NOVEMBER 1976 AND MARCH/APRIL 1977

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 1012

BEFORE DIRG STOPPED IT WITH PUBLIC EXECUTIONS OF 6 KEBELE MEMBERS IN APRIL 1977 FOR GROSS EXCESSES. THIS WAS ALLEGEDLY MOMENT WHEN ME'I SONE BEGAN TO MAKE PLANS TO GO UNDERGROUND, AWARE THAT DIRG WOULD NOT FULLY SUPPORT ITS PROGRAMS NOR ITS ACCRETION OF POLITICAL POWER.) ALEMU'S CONTINUED ESPOUSAL OF CAMPAIGN, EVEN THOUGH THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT DIRG BELIEVES IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED ITS MAJOR GOAL OF CRUSHING EPRP, REINFORCES DIRG DOUBTS ABOUT ALEMU'S REAL INTENTIONS, I.E., THAT HE MAY ONLY BE ATTEMPTING TO ALIENATE CIVILIAN POPULATION FROM DIRG TO PROVIDE FRUITFUL RECRUITMENT BASE FOR ME'I SONE.

3. OTHER ELEMENTS OF CAMPAIGN CAUSING DIRG PARTICULAR CONCERN IS INDEPENDENCE FROM DIRG CONTROL OF POL/MIL CADRES WORKING THROUGH DEFENSE SQUADS AND POMOA HIT TEAMS. THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS REPORTS REACHING DIRG THROUGH TRADITIONAL ETHIOPIAN CHANNELS OF FAMILY AND RELATIVES, THAT HARSH INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES AND SUMMARY EXECU-
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TIONS ARE BEING USED BY THESE CADRES TO ENHANCE THEIR POWER AND CONTROL WITHIN KEBELE (NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION) STRUCTURE IN ADDIS ABABA. (N.B. DEFENSE SQUADS HAVE ALWAYS HAD INDEPENDENT STATUS WITHIN KEBELES. THEY BEGAN TO PROLIFERATE IN AUGUST 1977 AND ARE APPARENTLY RESPONSIBLE TO NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY OPERATIONS COMMAND, NROC AND NOT KEBELE HIERARCHY.) THUS UNDER COVER OF RED TERROR CAMPAIGN AND THROUGH KEBELE STRUCTURE, POL/MIL

CADRES HOPE TO CHALLENGE DIRG AUTHORITY.

4. ANOTHER RELIABLE SOURCE WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO ONE OF ETHIOPIAN PARTICIPANTS IN RECENT MENGISTU-AARON CONVERSATION WAS TOLD THAT MENGISTU HAD SAID HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO REDUCE SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE AT THIS TIME BECAUSE OF "CONDITIONS IN THE AREA." WHEREAS US SIDE INTERPRETED THIS AS OBVIOUS MILITARY DEPENDENCE ON SOVIETS/CUBANS, SOURCE STATED THAT PARTICIPANT AT CONVERSATION HAD INTERPRETED MENGISTU REMARK WITHIN INTERNAL CONTEXT OF PRO-SOVIET ELEMENTS WITHIN DIRG. PARTICIPANT BELIEVED THAT POWER WITHIN DIRG WAS NOT AS CENTRALIZED UNDER MENGISTU AS SOME THOUGHT, AND THAT AT LEAST FOR MOMENT, MENGISTU COULD NOT ACT AS PRECIPITIOUSLY AGAINST THESE POTENTIAL CONTENDERS AS HE HAD IN FEB 77 (PURGING FORMER PMAC CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTE) OR AGAINST ATNAFU IN NOVEMBER 77. SOURCE STATED PERSONALLY THAT ALTHOUGH MENGISTU STILL VERY MUCH IN CONTROL, VARIOUS PRESSURES ON HIM ARE NOT EASED BY US PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH GIVE APPEARANCE THAT US GOVT ENJOYS GREATER INFLUENCE ON MENGISTU THAN MAY BE ACTUAL CASE AND HE URGED US TO REFRAIN FROM SUCH STATEMENTS. IN THIS REGARD, SOURCE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER RECENT LINKAGE OF MENGISTU'S ASSURANCES ABOUT ETHIOPIAN INTENTIONS NOT TO CROSS SOMALI FRONTIER WITH SEC VANCE'S AND PRES. CARTER'S WARNINGS ABOUT FUTURE US POLICY RESPONSES. HE SAID SUCH IRRE-
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SPONSIBLE JOURNALISM WAS UNWITTING MEANS OF ADDING UNNECESSARY PRESSURE ON MENGISTU'S POSITION WITHIN DIRG, WHICH COULD LATER FORCE HIM TO DEMONSTRATE HE IS REALLY "RADICAL" AND NOT SUBJECT TO "IMPERIALIST" PRESSURES.

5. IF DIRG IN FACT DECIDES TO CURTAIL RED TERROR CAMPAIGN, DEGREE TO WHICH IT IS SUCCESSFUL MAY BE GOOD INDICATION OF INTERNAL DIRG RELATIONSHIPS AND MENGISTU'S CONTINUED ABILITY TO WIELD SUPREME AUTHORITY WITHIN DIRG. THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED RUMORS THAT MENGISTU MAY BE CONTEMPLATING MAJOR AMNESTY OF KEBELE PRISONERS. SUCH A DECISION WOULD BE HIGHLY POPULAR AMONG CIVILIANS, BUT CREATE POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEMS AMONG RED TERROR PROPONENTS WITHIN AND CLOSE TO DIRG. IT IS TRUE MENGISTU WAS ABLE TO ACT FORCEFULLY AGAINST ME'I SONE'S EARLIER, RELATIVELY WEAK CHALLENGE, HOWEVER, SINCE THE TREMENDOUS INFLUX OF SOVIET, CUBAN AND EAST GERMAN PERSONNEL AFTER AUGUST 1977, SIMILAR ACTION AGAINST ELEMENTS FAVORABLE TO THESE COUNTRIES, WHOM MENGISTU MAY PERCEIVE AS CHALLENGE, MAY BE GREATLY CIRCUMSCRIBED FOR TIME BEING.
MATHERON

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Message Attributes

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